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PRESS RELEASE

Argentina: Senate Passes Right to Information Bill

With 38 votes against 26, the Argentine Senate passed an access to information bill on 29 September. The proposal is now being reviewed by Congress's lower house, the Chamber of Deputies.

“Both houses of Congress need to collaborate now and deliver a right to information law,” comments ARTICLE 19 Executive Director Agnès Callamard. *“The Argentine people have been repeatedly calling on their government to legislate on the right to information to improve governance and democracy.”*

In Argentina, access to information is primarily regulated by Decree 1772/2003 and applies only to documents held by the executive. A national bill passed by both houses of Congress would apply to all executive, legislative and judicial branches of the federal government.

This year, both the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies in the Argentine Congress have discussed different bills on access to information. According to a national campaign for the right to information, ‘Saber Es un Derecho, que Ahora Sea Ley’ (Knowing is a Right, Now it Shall Be Law), 16 bills on the right to information were put before the Chamber of Deputies and nine before the Senate.

The lack of a collaborative effort across both houses was a concern due to previous failures to pass a national access to information law. In 2003, a right to information bill received support from the Chamber of Deputies, but was eventually dropped from the Senate's agenda in 2005. The failure was a major regional setback as many countries in the continent were simultaneously pushing for greater transparency. Since 2003, Chile, Ecuador, Peru and Uruguay have adopted comprehensive access to information laws, while the Colombian legislation dates back to 1985.

ARTICLE 19 welcomes the Senate's passing of the access to information bill and urges competing blocs within the Argentine Congress not to repeat the 2003 failure.

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- ARTICLE 19 is an independent human rights organisation that works around the world to protect and promote the right to freedom of expression. It takes its name from Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees free speech.